



Concept Note

Marta Station Kiosk

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to lay out the design concepts for the Marta station kiosk. Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, or simply MARTA, has provided city transportation to the citizens of Atlanta since 1972, when it opened its first bus service. Since then, the system has expanded dramatically, making it the ninth largest transit system in the U.S. and North America providing bus, rail, and paratransit service.

With this expansion has come the need to create maps that will be able to help the people of Atlanta understand the ins and outs of the rail and bus system. In order to provide such a service, a kiosk will be created allowing MARTA users access to general information in each station. The kiosk will allow users to access information through interactive maps, rather than using static maps, which tend to be outdated.

2 Target Audience

The audience definition is a broad description of a possible market segment or group that will be using the prospective site. MARTA is Atlanta's official city transportation provider, and therefore the target audience is to all those seeking travel in this area.

3 Sitemap

A typical sitemap presents the top few levels of the information hierarchy. It provides a broad view of the content in the web site and facilitates random access to segmented portions of that content. When looking at a sitemap as a hard copy, it is easier to get a feel for the general layout of a site without becoming over laden with images and graphics.

The following page shows the sitemap that will be employed for the Heritage MARTA station kiosk. The homepage is indicated at the top. This, of course, is the opening screen of the kiosk. Below, the following list represents the various stations for which the kiosk provides information. Global navigation can be thought of as links that never stray from the overall layout of the page. Any links below this global navigation is considered secondary navigation, and is only displayed in its designated area. Ideally, the entire map would be interactive with each possible station providing information; however, this is merely a prototype for which to show how the actual application would work. Therefore, only a select few stations will be active at this time. If the application were indeed going to built, each station would have its own functionality.

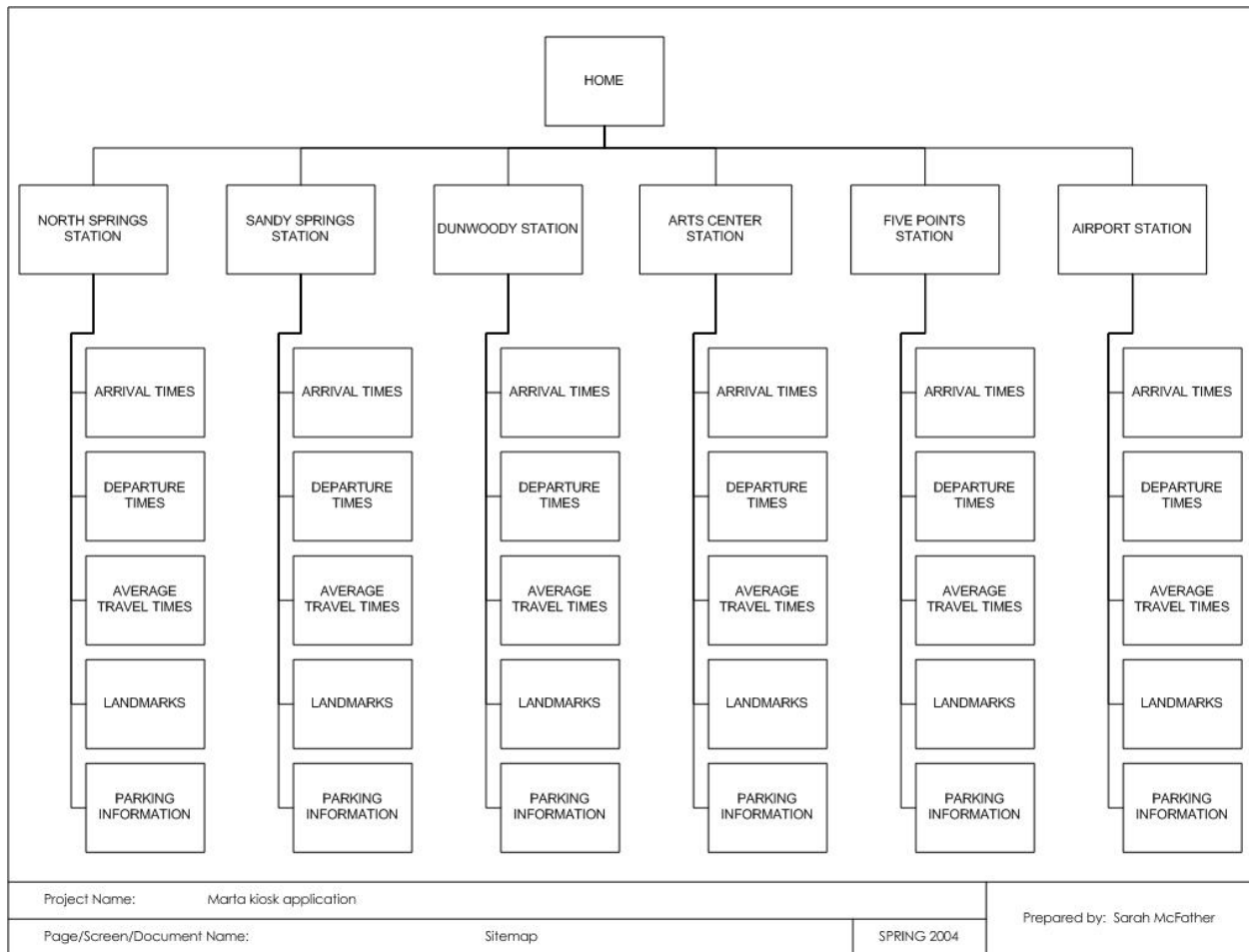


Figure 1: Sitemap for MARTA station kiosk

4 Overall Design Approach

The design approach for the MARTA station kiosk was to keep the design simple, to the point, and reminiscent of the current website. That being said, the amount of animation for the kiosk would be kept to a minimum, with only basic transitions used to make the kiosk more interactive.

The kiosk would use the same primary colors found on the website: blue, orange, yellow, and white. No information other than general station information will be included on the kiosk to avoid any confusion to the user. The maps displayed on the kiosk will be the same maps that can be found from station to station throughout the entire Atlanta railway. Patrons would be able to click on a link on the map to find out what station it is and its address. If they want to click another station, they may do so; otherwise, the patron can click to find out more information about the currently selected station.

Upon selecting to find out more information about the current station, they are taken to a new screen with a different layout. They will again see a map of the MARTA railway, which has been zoomed so that the patron is just looking at the section of the map with their selected station. They would also be able to click on various links (designated as sub-navigation in the sitemap, such as arrival/departure times, travel times, parking information, and common points of interest at that particular stop.

Finally, a panoramic viewfinder is displayed so that the user can see what that particular station looks like. The user can opt to move the mouse left and right to make the panoramic image move; alternatively, the user can also use buttons that would be found on the kiosk itself to make the image move. For the purposes of this web application, the left and right arrow keys would function as these toggle buttons.

5 Branding and Identity

The kiosk has been designed with the same basic color scheme as the current website so that the branding and identity of the company is not lost. In addition, the work MARTA is used in the application with the same general graphic feel, so the average patron will automatically associate the kiosk with the transit authority. In addition, the kiosk uses the same maps found in the stations so that patrons can quickly associate and identify their particular station, which will encourage the patron to use the application.

6 Graphic Style & Typography

The MARTA website employs a website that has a boxy feel to it, but also uses curves to give it a feel that is not quite as angular. Likewise, the MARTA kiosk has been designed in a similar style, with both rounded and angled corners.

For typography, the kiosk was designed with Arial, the same font that is used on the website. The main difference between the two is that the kiosk uses Arial Black to make the text stand out more. The font used for the logo is the same that MARTA designed for their site and for corporate branding.

7 Layout

Layout is the first step that a designer must take in beginning the overall plan of an interactive design. It creates an element of organization—without it, content can quickly become cluttered and illogical in placement. While the rules for layout are different from websites to kiosks, they follow the same basic principle. For the MARTA kiosk application, the navigation needed to be pictorial as well as textual, as users in the target audience might need to know both the name of a station, but also where that station is located. Therefore, the navigation was broken into two sections: the initial map navigation and then the station navigation which was text-based.

The map navigation was the area that the user would see first. The opening screen gave the user a map where he or she might be able to click on the station that he or she needed. Upon clicking on a station (a button on the map), information would appear, telling them which station he or she chose and another link to get more information if needed.

If the user did not need any additional information on that particular station, he or she could use the map navigation again to choose another station. If the user wanted to learn more about the station selected, the link for more information would take them to the next screen, which was where the second navigation was located. In this section, the map would be static—zoomed in so that the user could peruse that area closely, and to the left of the map, they could pick various text links that provided information specific to that station.

When the user was finished, he or she could click a link that would return them to the original screen. The layout just described is identical for all stations.

Because it is a kiosk, it was important not to have any scrolling at all in the application. Therefore, the site was designed for an 800x600 screen resolution. The application could be used as a touch-screen or with a simple key board, which need only supply a built-in mouse, a click button, and arrow keys. The arrow keys would be there for users to pan an image of the station found in the second section of the kiosk. However, it would not be mandatory for such keys, as the panoramic area can operate with a simple hover over the left and right side of the image.

8 Colors

As mentioned before, the MARTA kiosk application was designed to look very similar to the MARTA website so that brand recognition might be reinforced. The principal colors of the design were a royal blue, yellow, orange, black, and white.

Provided below are the colors that were used for the MARTA kiosk:






Color Thumbnail	Hex Color Code	Font Type	Description
	#000099		Background color
	#FFFFFF		Content area background color
	#000000	Arial	Text color
	#FFFF00		Link rollover state color
	#FF6600		Textual link graphic color

Figure 2: Color swatches for MARTA kiosk application

9 Interaction & Links

The links in the first section are dots on a map that turn from black to yellow to indicate their interactivity. Upon clicking one of these links, a new text link appears allowing the user to continue to the second section of the site, which provides information about the station selected. In this second section, the links are text, but have squares to the left of them that turn from orange to yellow to indicate interactivity.

In the second section, there is also a panoramic image that users can view of the station in question. The panoramic image has a mask overlay so that the user can scan the entire station. They have two options for scrolling. The first option is to hover over the left or right side of the image. The image will then pan left or right until the panoramic has gone as far as it can go respectively. The other option is to use the keyboard arrows to pan left or right. Instructions on either method can be found under the panoramic image.

10 Conclusion

The goal of the design of this kiosk is to provide information about MARTA's transit system to the user that might not have any initial knowledge about each station. Creating a simple, interactive design helps to display this information in a way that is intuitive can help these users easily find their way. By combining identity-basing colors with a clean layout, a user can easily navigate to each station and its information without having to search incessantly. By combining these elements of color, navigation, and layout, a perspective user will be sure to have luck in getting around Atlanta's signature railway transit.